



TO: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
FROM: Disability Rights Oregon
DATE: February 14, 2024
RE: **SB 1530 -- Support**

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee. My name is Ben Gurewitz, I am a Public Policy Advocate at Disability Rights Oregon. DRO would like to express our appreciation for Senator Jama bringing forward this important investment in rental assistance and eviction protection.

It is no secret that homelessness is highly prevalent amongst the population of people with disabilities. A Report published by the National Disability Institute found that the poverty rates for adults with disabilities is more than twice the rate for their nondisabled counterparts¹. Additionally, the 2015 City of Portland point in time count found 57% of identified individuals to have a disability². Many people with disabilities either work for very low wages or receive disability benefits that aren't enough to survive on. Housing options become exceedingly difficult when they must find housing that is both affordable and accessible according to the Americans with Disabilities Act. That is why it is especially important for individuals to remain in their housing once they have found an option suitable for their needs.

Rent assistance is an important step in alleviating homelessness amongst Oregon's Disability Community

For people experiencing disabilities and their families, home means a stable, appropriate and affordable place where they can have supports to live and work as valued members of Oregon communities. When they cannot find housing, their support is jeopardized or interrupted. Without housing support supports, their ability to be community members is destabilized. When people lose or delay their support, they risk losing their jobs, relationships and community connections – which are the major aspects of being a community member.

Further, for many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, when they cannot find affordable, appropriate or safe housing, they are forced to explore more expensive living

¹ Goodman, Nanette, Michael Morris, and Kelvin Boston. Publication. FINANCIAL INEQUALITY: Disability, Race and Poverty in America. Washington DC : National Disability Institute , n.d.

² "Homelessness Statistics." Homelessness Toolkit, City of Portland , 12 Feb. 2016, www.portlandoregon.gov/toolkit/article/562207.

arrangements like group homes or foster homes. For individuals with disabilities, they rely on rent assistance to remain in their homes where they can experience a sense of predictability and normalcy. However, without the crucial rent assistance they struggle to afford the housing options available to them and can end up houseless.

Rent Assistance is one major piece of the puzzle in Oregon's efforts to fight homelessness. 85% of eviction filings are for nonpayment, against people who have fallen behind on their rent. Resulting in over 2000 eviction filings a month.

Now more than ever it is critical that Oregon passes SB 1530 and provide the opportunity through rent assistance to ensure for safe, affordable and appropriate housing to support thousands of individuals experiencing disabilities across the state. Disability Rights Oregon would like to echo the urgency that many others have expressed – there is truly no time to wait.

About Disability Rights Oregon

Since 1977 Disability Rights Oregon has been the State's Protection and Advocacy System.³ We are authorized by Congress to protect, advocate, and enforce the rights of people with disabilities under the U.S. Constitution and Federal and State laws, investigate abuse and neglect of people with disabilities, and "pursue administrative, legal, and other appropriate remedies".⁴ We are also mandated to "educate policymakers" on matters related to people with disabilities.⁵

If you have any questions regarding DRO's position on this legislation, please call Ben Gurewitz at 971-806-7908 or email him at bgurewitz@droregon.org.

³ See ORS 192.517.

⁴ See 42 U.S.C. § 15041 et seq; 42 U.S.C. § 10801 et seq.

⁵ See 42 U.S. Code § 15043(a)(2)(L).